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**CHAFEE TO TRAVEL TO VENEZUELA TO DISCUSS
US/VENEZUELAN RELATIONS WITH PRESIDENT CHAVEZ**
Chafee Will Support Democracy and Offer Anti-Poverty Aid

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) will join two other lawmakers tomorrow in an official trip to Venezuela, which will include a meeting with President Hugo Chavez, the target of a recent short-lived coup.

The delegation, which will leave on Friday morning and return to Washington on Saturday evening, will include Senator Chafee, as well as Representatives Cass Ballenger (R-NC), and William Delahunt (D-MA). Chafee is the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere.

Senator Chafee expects that the meeting with President Chavez will involve numerous topics, including: the United States' commitment to furthering the cause of democracy in the Western Hemisphere.

Senator Chafee also hopes to discuss with President Chavez what the U.S. can do to help Venezuela reduce the high rate of poverty, which helps to undermine the country's democratic institutions. Venezuela is America's third leading source of petroleum, and therefore plays a crucial role in the U.S. economy, especially as events in the Middle East threaten to tighten international oil supplies.

The lawmakers will also meet with anti-Chavez labor leader Carlos Ortega, Defense Minister Rangel, and several Venezuelan lawmakers.

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